



**ABRAR
Trauma &
Mental
Health
Services**

2023

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

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About Us

We are an organization federally incorporated in 2022 (1363840-5), aiming to serve diverse newcomers and immigrants. We provide our services in English, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Hindi (with plans to expand to more languages) virtually across Canada and in person in the GTA, Hamilton area, and Calgary. We focus on providing top services to our clients, having professional counsellors with lived experiences in clients' mother languages.



Our Mission & Vision

ABRAR Trauma and Mental Health Services is a for-profit organization that provides affordable, trauma-informed, art-based, and culturally competent mental support for diverse newcomers and immigrant populations. Services are carried out through professionals with lived experiences who prioritize the creation of safe and comfortable environments. We resonate with our people and respect diversity, vulnerability, resilience, new ideas, and passion.

Our vision is to create client-centred and culturally appropriate safe spaces that ensure healing and growth out of trauma, explicitly using trauma-informed and art-based early intervention approaches for newcomers and immigrants so that they may thrive.

2023 Services



We offer our services in **Arabic, English, and Persian**; recently, in 2023, we added **Hindi and Urdu**.

We served **60 clients** on (a one-to-one counselling basis) and ran around **30 workshops** and healing circles.

We launched two office spaces in Hamilton. (**One James St for youth support - 423 King St E for women support**)

We launched a Free One-to-one Drop-in Counseling & Free Drop-in support group for youth in person in Hamilton.



One-to-One Counselling

We provide one-to-one counselling for newcomers and immigrants, particularly women and youth. Our services use trauma-informed and culturally competent approaches and are provided in Arabic, English, Persian, and Hindi.



Family and Couple Coaching

We provide family and couple coaching to provide families with the tools to thrive. Coaching sessions focus on empowering immigrant and newcomer families or couples with advice and techniques to create resilient relationships.



Workshops

We create and run psychoeducation, art therapy, and mental health workshops on a range of relevant topics, including self-care, coping mechanisms, emotional regulation, time management, and anxiety management.



Support Groups

Our support groups are led by culturally similar/competent facilitators to lead discussions on community-specific issues. We have led multiple support groups in both English and Arabic, such as "Health in the Diaspora" (2021-2022) in collaboration with Pathways Education Hamilton for high school newcomers, as well as a workshop with Spectrum for mainly newcomers in the QT-BIPOC community. Additionally, with the support of Steps2Flourish, we ran a series of workshops for university students to support them with skills like stress management, time management, and more.



Training

We train other service providers and community organizations on ensuring best practices with newcomer populations. We helped train for Kids Phone staffing on working with newcomers youth.



Research

We lead research projects on the mental health of the populations we work with (newcomers and immigrants). Professionals with related lived experiences and insights conduct our research. Our first research was at the In This Together campaign, where we shared the final report with Minister Carolyn Bennett, Public Health, other ministries and government representatives.

2023 Projects



Brave Space

In light of the continued Islamophobic incidents in Canada, Brave Space was created as an intervention module of support group sessions (4 sessions) for Muslim women who felt threatened and have been impacted by the recent Islamophobic incidents (the Afzaal London Family in 2021 and the Hamilton attack).

Brave Space was successfully piloted in Hamilton in November & December 2021, with great support from [HCCI \(Hamilton Center for Civic Inclusion\)](#) & [SACHA](#) & [Nrinder Nann](#).

In 2022, we led a memorial event in June honouring the memory of the Afzaal London Family's tragic Islamophobic attack and had a panel of well-achieved Muslim women sharing their stories and resiliency. We successfully delivered, in partnership with [Islamic Relief Canada](#) and HCCI, the project in 4 cities in 2023 (London 7 sessions - Hamilton as a support group of 11 sessions) & one-time workshops in (Kitchener - Mississauga) with excellent feedback from the community; we had served in total around 70 participants.

Dil Ba Dil (Heart to Heart)

"Dil Ba Dil" (a Dari phrase meaning "heart to heart") is a trauma-informed, culturally competent, and early intervention weekly support group project for Afghan newcomer women, including refugees and immigrants. Our vision is to empower Afghan women with the tools and strategies they need to continue their healing journey as they resettle in Canada. This weekly support group is a brave space for expression, connection, and information for Afghan newcomer women to promote their mental health and well-being. The project was conducted as a pilot from mid-Oct 2022 till Dec 2022 at Kitchener, Ontario. This project was funded by [The Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) & [Future Ready Initiative](#) and facilitated by ABRAR Trauma & Mental Health Services.

We had 28 participants, and 16 -20 were committed to the whole project.

In 2023, we successfully secured a fund of \$65,000 to execute four cohorts: two online globally, one in person in Calgary, and one in person in Toronto. Through strategic planning and execution, we delivered the Calgary cohort with an impressive turnout, averaging 14 participants per session. Additionally, we provided childcare for 14 children in partnership with [TIES](#).

Intersect/ACT

[The Intersect Act](#), provides individuals who have experienced racism and hate with crucial information and support, including legal support, advocacy, culturally sensitive referrals, workshops, translation support, strategies for recognizing, documenting, and recovering from racism and hate, and support accessing basic needs like housing, healthcare, and employment that often create racism-related barriers for QT-BIPOC folks. YWCA Hamilton is leading this project, and our role is to create a toolkit that informs best practices for working with the QT-BIPOC community for service providers.

We launched the toolkit in January 2023.

2023 Highlights & Events



- We have achieved our strategic goal of expanding our presence in Alberta and had a launching (meet & greet) event with around 45 attendees in July.
- We presented at the [NARHC Conference](#) 2023 highlighting our Dil ba Dil project and had around 100/150 attending it.
- We partnered with McMaster Research Shop to run an environmental scan on the mental health services and support provided to newcomers and immigrants across
- Canada.
- We launched our first Fundraising Gala in December with a great turnout of 70 attendees and raised \$7500, including the sponsorships.
- We achieved a partnership with the McMaster Research Shop, where we did an environmental scan to better understand the existing services for newcomers' mental health.
- We had a gala celebrating our 3rd Anniversary with the team and close supporters in Toronto.
- Facilitated in-person support with Jack.org with their Jack Summit 2023 and did a video shoot for their Be There Project.
- Had a [TV interview](#) with Muslim Network TV to feature our Dil Ba Dil Project
- We expanded our volunteer teams, adding new 10/15 youth to the following teams (Research - Community Outreach - Events and Fundraising)
- We partnered on many community projects and events, especially those art and drama-based projects (with Marsm at their Faraj Sleman concert - with SMILE Canada at RECFEST - with Kawalease ACT at their new play Interrogation).
- We partnered with the City of Hamilton on their Salam campaign at the planning and implementation phase of the campaign to tackle islamophobia in Hamilton.
- We launched Free One-to-One counselling and Healing Circles to support Palestinians and those impacted by the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the Middle East.
- We partnered with Plan International Canada to deliver the PowerWithin Project in Alberta and Ontario (Kitchener - Hamilton - Calgary - Edmonton - Mississauga).
- We signed a 5 years agreement with Windsor University for MSW students placement.
- We incorporated a new software system, Power Dairy, for our caseload and case notes.
- We have expanded our Professional team to 10 professionals.

Partners and Supporters



Humaniti (Sponsor)

Islamic Relief Canada (Sponsor)

HCCI (Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion) (Trustee)

YWCA Hamilton (Sponsor)

Kids Help Phone

SMILE Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada

Future Ready Initiative

Kawalease ACT

Steps2flourish

NMC-CESI and the University of Toronto

TIES The Immigrant Education Society (Sponsor)

City of Hamilton

City of Calgary

McMaster Research Shop

Masrawy Egyptian Kitchen (Sponsor)

CMW Kitchener

Plan International Canada (Sponsor)

CCLC London

YMCA London

The Somali Community in Hamilton (Sponsor)

TPFF (The Palestinian Film Festival)

Marsm

Nisa Homes

BAM Collective

The New Mentality

Jack.org

IWC Hamilton

Mishka Social Services

HARRC

ISSA

And others

*Thank
you!*

Our Team



Professional & Core Team

Ghada Almojarkich (Family Coach & Counsellor) - Arabic Speaker
Amira Abutaaa (Youth Counsellor) - Arabic Speaker
Maryam Tehranchi (Family & Women Counsellor) - Persian Speaker
Vida Ghodraty (Dil Ba Dil Facilitator & Mental Health Counselor) - Persian/Dari Speaker
Fariba Dezhbankhan (Dil Ba Dil Facilitator & Mental Health Counselor) - Calgary - Persian/Dari Speaker
Thomson Fernandes (Mental Health Counselor) - Hindu Speaker
Kelsey Beson (MSW placement - in training professional) - Mental Health Counsellor - MSW
Suzanna Geng (MSW placement - in training professional) - Mandarin Speaker
Rochelle Whyllie (MSW placement - in training professional)
Mahnoor Ahmed (Mental Health Counselor) - Hindu & Urdu Speaker
Nuha Dhooma (Mental Health Counselor) - Arabic Speaker
Tasha Matar (Art Therapist Intern & RSW)
Abrar Mechmechia (Trauma Counsellor) - Arabic Speaker
Rabia Ahmed (Research Leader & Project Lead)
Hel Kevorkian (Project Designer & Research Assistant)
Shabnam Mahboobi (Dil Ba Dil Project Lead)
Amira Youssef (Brave Space Project Lead)
Humeyra Nur Celebi (Brave Space Facilitator & Mental Health Counselor)- London ON - Turkish Speaker

Admin & Marketing Team

Joseph Rabahya (Administrative Manager) - Till March 2023
Fatima Ahmed (Admin Coordinator)
Janat Akbar (Admin Coordinator)
Sadia Fazelyar (Event Coordinator)
Nancy Lok Sze Leung (Research Leader)
Rawd Almasoud (Videographic and editor & Dil ba Dil Project Coordinator)
Wafaa Dahous (Graphic Designer)
Mohamed Mechmechia (Graphic Designer & Social Media Content Coordinator)
Fadi Khouri (Photographer)

Advisory Team

Wendy Miller (Strategic Advisor)
Dr.Farah Islam (Research and Content Advisor)
Irwin Elman (Strategic Advisor)
Eric Windeler(Strategic Advisor)

Our Volunteers

Community Outreach

Dana Bakri
Aleena Khan
Des Robinson
Leyah Mirza
Zainab Haidari
Fatima Sohail (Fundraising Team)

Research Assistance

Noor Saeed
Nusrat Iftikar
Sumeyra
Omar Mohamed